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ABSTRACT

Noting that scientific observation of children's dreaming offers unparalleled opportunities to study experience of conscious mental states, this book presents findings from two studies on children's dreaming. Following an argument outlining the problems in equating dreaming with perception, the book explains the use of sleep laboratories and differentiates methods used by psychoanalysts from those used by psychologists and biologists. Two studies are presented: a longitudinal study and a cross sectional replication. Data collection methods included standardized interviews and cognitive testing. Findings suggested that dreaming is a high level cognitive process with skill prerequisites lacking in infancy, unfolding slowly in preschool, and developing into full form between 5 and 9 years. Implications of findings for infantile amnesia are noted. The book maintains that consciousness develops more slowly and later than generally believed: until about age 5 children do not code knowledge in a consciously accessible form, and young children's knowledge is not consciously accessible as episodic recollections. The book notes that spatial skills seem to contribute to the appearance and development of consciousness. It is argued that the human person emerges with the emergence of active self-representation, autobiographical memory, and a sense of self lending continuity to experience and further suggests that dream data are the best source of information on the development of a conscious mental life. Further, the book posits that the late development of narrative dreaming suggests an equally late development of waking reflective self-awareness. Finally, the book supports the legitimacy of studying the psychological realm. The book's appendix documents two children's dream reports. Contains 115 references. (KB)

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